1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

476 ties of act, sentiment, and obligation which make up family
577 relationships.
602 That he is doing so becomes evident when we find that the habitual, obligatorily performed acts toward extended relatives are similarly described, where the context is definitely not economic nor connected with agricultural labor. Thus in the townland where we examined agricultural coöperation there takes place the same lending of a boy or girl and the giving of a hand in aid at such festivals of social and family life as weddings, christenings, wakes, and funerals.

This aid is felt to be the same category. Thus one farmer speaking of another, his second cousin, could say:

> He is the best friend we ever had; we can make bold on him. When the children were little and our cow died on us, Johnny sent down a cow and calf worth twelve pounds to us and didn't want anything for it.

And in more general terms, another farmer could explain:

> Everybody's friends in the country here are very good to you. They lend you a horse with the hay or a boy going to the fair, or they send down to know if they can help when somebody dies with you.

476 Thus it is part of the "friendliness" for the relatives to
577 make up and serve the food at wakes and weddings, to
602 dig the grave for the dead, and to keen (wail) over the dead.
●764 The obligatory character and something of the reciprocities involved in such behavior are well expressed by one countryman who gave as his reason for going to a funeral (at a time when he was needed at home for farm work): "I have right to go (to the funeral of a second cousin); they always come over to this side."

476 Likewise, when in Luogh a man's wife died and his sister
577 took over the child, she was praised for doing the "friendly"
602 thing which she "had right" to do. In the very same terms a

6: Ó Súilleabháin B-4, 5 (no date) 1956 ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Two Death Customs in Ireland

SEÁN Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN

DUBLIN

121 In this article, I wish to draw the attention of students of the cult of the dead to two customs associated with it which have been observed for many generations in the southwest of Ireland. So far as I know, neither of them has hitherto been described in detail in any scientific journal or other work.

1. Funeral Boundaries

764 The importance of *an teampoll dúchais*, the traditional family burial-ground, is shown by the many customs and superstitions relating to it which are still fairly common in rural communities in Ireland. How often have we heard or read of a strange funeral seen at night, which was composed of deceased relatives of some recently dead person who had died and had been buried far from his family graveyard; the dead concourse was taking the body home (often even across the Atlantic) to find rest with his deceased kith and kin? Or, of a decapitated or maimed corpse which had been buried in the proper graveyard; the missing head or other member, however, was carefully carried by a "dead funeral" at night and laid in the same grave as the body? Thus, every effort within reason was made to bury the dead in the family burial-ground. This might have been due either to (a) respect for the dead, (b) fear of evil results, if the duty was ignored, (c) the wish of the dying person to be buried with his ancestors, or (d) any of a long list of other reasons which might be adduced. Even within a far-flung parish, the distance which the corpse had to be carried might amount to twenty miles. The distance would naturally be greater when the person had died in a remote district or county. Thus, funerals often took days in such cases, and halts had to be made overnight. The hardship endured by the coffin-bearers, who in olden times [482] almost always carried the coffin on their shoulders, may well be imagined.

In Ireland, as in most European countries, in the days when coffins were borne on men's shoulders, and even still in certain parts of Ireland, certain resting-places for funerals were traditionally appointed along the route. These were often at crossroads, at ancient market-crosses, which may have been associated with boundaries, or at boundaries between lands, parishes, or counties. In olden times, the corpse was not allowed to touch the earth at these resting-places; the toes of the

boots of the bearers or else the type of barrow (of wood or straw) on which the coffin was borne, served to prevent the coffin from touching the soil. Again, in Ireland (at least, in parts of County Wexford), as in some European countries, wooden crosses or other memorials were left behind at such halts; in the Kilmore area of South Wexford, two crosses are carried with each funeral—one is left at the roadside at a halting-place, the other is set up on the grave. Cairns were often associated with funeral resting-places. It was customary in certain European countries for the bearers to partake of food and drink at resting-points; this, I am told, was the practice also in parts of Donegal and Waterford. Having rested for a while, fresh bearers took up the coffin, and the graveyard was ultimately reached. 764 [264]

I have already referred to the practice of laying down the coffin when a boundary-line was reached. My father, who died six years ago, at the age of 86, told me about a funeral-boundary custom in my native parish of Tuosist, in County Kerry, in the extreme southwest corner of Ireland. He was born in 1863 in the townland of Clogherane in Kerry, only a mile distant from the County Cork border. The high range of the Caha Mountains runs for over thirty miles through the peninsula of Béara, and separates at this point the Kerry parish of Tuosist from the Cork parish of Clanlawrence. During the Famine period of 1845–50 the men who lived at either side of the pass, Bealach Scairte, which led from one county (and parish) to the other, were employed, by way of a relief-scheme, in building a road across the pass. When the work ceased, the middle portion—about two miles in length—still remained undone. And so it remained until about twenty-five years ago, when, by the aid of State funds, the road now known as The Healy Pass was built across the mountain and the two ends were joined up. I often crossed by the old path from Kerry to Cork myself, before the new road was built; it was not so difficult in the early stage of the journey, but when the narrow defile (An Céim Cumhang) at the border was reached, one had to clamber as best one could over and between huge boulders which had fallen into the defile, some of them weighing forty or fifty tons, at a rough estimate. 764 491 [794]

Any funeral which now has occasion to pass from Cork to Kerry (or *vice versa*), can do so with the luxury of a hearse and motor-cars. But it was different when my father was a boy, and for long generations before that. He told me that one day, when he was on his way to the school at Glenmore—it was in the 1870's—he saw a large concourse of men, both young and old, passing along the old road at the foot of the mountain and through the fields. They were all carrying weapons or implements of some kind—some had hay-forks, he said, others had scythes, others hatchets, still others heavy sticks. He asked later on where they were going, and was told that they were going to meet a funeral, which was coming into Kerry from Cork, at the boundary-line. He told me that he knew well the Kerryman, who was leader of the large group; I knew him too, as he lived to a great age, and could speak no English. His name was Conchobhar Uaithne Ó Súilleabháin, and he lived at Shinnagh in the parish of Tuosist. My father told me that he heard later from some of those that were present at the boundary-line, that when the Corkmen appeared at the border, carrying the corpse tortuously on their shoulders, Conchobhar stepped in front of the bearers and stood with his stick raised on the large flat stone which marked the border at this point. The stone, by the way, is still known as Leac na gCorp (The Stone of the Corpses), and it is in the middle of the hollow which, avoiding the defile, was used by funerals, or by cattle 764 578 [191]

764 578 and sheep and horses being driven across to fairs at either side. The hollow is still named Eisc na gCorp (The Hollow of the Corpses), but travellers over the new road, which by-passed the hollow, cannot see it except they are told about it and search for it. To get back to my father's story: the Kerrymen, a hundred or more strong, had lined the boundary-line with their weapons ready for action and, as the Corkmen approached the flat stone, the Kerry leader ordered them to lay down the coffin on it.

"*Leagaidh síos annsan anois í! Ná téighidh a thuille!*"[1] he ordered, indicating the stone with his stick.

The Corkmen obeyed the order, and the Kerrymen then took the coffin on their shoulders and bore it down the mountainside into their own territory and along the six miles of road to the graveyard at Kilmackillogue. No fighting took place at the border-line on that day. But it was not always so on previous occasions. I heard the old people of the parish say that fights took place in former years when funerals crossed the boundary at Leac na gCorp, and that some of those engaged had been killed.

I know of three other boundary-lines where similar precautions were taken against those who carried the coffin to the border-line forcing their way across, while still carrying the remains. The first was at Glaise'n Fhineáin, a stream some miles to the west of Leac na gCorp, in the Béara peninsula, whose waters separate the counties of Cork and Kerry. The second was at Barrlinn, an old mountain road between counties Cork and Kerry, which ran southwards from Kilgarvan in the latter county to Bantry in the former; a cairn lies just beside the boundary-line where funerals halted and bearers were exchanged; fights are said to have taken place here in former times when funerals crossed the border. These two boundary-lines, as well as that described in more detail at Leac na gCorp, are all fairly close together, and all three are at the dividing-lines of parishes as well as counties. I have been told of still another boundary-line where fights took place on funeral days. This is the mountain pass known as Mullach Bhéal in the Dingle peninsula in Kerry, over which funerals passed in former times (before the Connor Hill road was built). These funerals were either on their way westwards from the parish of Clochán to some graveyard in the parishes to the west, or *vice versa*. Old people in that area tell of coffins even having been broken at this point during the attempt to force the boundary-line, and a large cairn marks the spot. Even when this old route was by-passed by the building of the Connor Hill road, and funerals followed the new route, the men from either side who assembled at the boundary insisted that the coffin be handed over to them at that point, and they carried it into their own parish. [493] When carts replaced shoulder-bearers at a later date, the coffin had to be transferred from the cart which had carried it to the border to one from the other parish.

The reason given in more recent times for the insistence on the change of bearers being made at the border was that the men of the second parish (to which the funeral was going) did not wish it to be said by the men of the first parish that their assistance was needed to carry the coffin further; they were strong enough to bear the coffin into and through their own parish without any help from outsiders. This reason is hardly the main one, however, and is likely to have been put forward only when the original reason had been forgotten.

[1] "Lay it down there now! Don't go any further!"

In Tuosist the reason given to me by my father and some other old people was that ill-luck would fall upon Kerry and especially on the parish of Tuosist, if the Corkmen succeeded in forcing the coffin across Leac na gCorp and laid it down on Kerry soil. Sickness, bad crops, and misfortunes of many kinds would follow the corpse, if it were laid beyond the boundary-stone. This is undoubtedly the original reason for the defence of the border on funeral days. A corpse has in many lands for long been regarded as having evil magical power (known scientifically as *orenda* or *mana*) of an impersonal kind latent in itself. In Ireland, for example, fishermen regarded it as unlucky to take the corpse of a drowned person into a boat. Also, *an féar gorta* ("the hungry grass"), which grew wherever a corpse touched the earth, had the power of causing all those who walked over the spot to be stricken with abnormal hunger. Many other instances of the evil power of a corpse might be cited. Just two hundred years ago, Morty Óg O'Sullivan, a native chieftain of Béara in West Cork, who had fought against the British both in Ireland and in many European countries as a member of the "Wild Geese", was slain outside his own house near Eyeries in Béara. The British took his body to a warship at Bere Island and dragged it through the sea in the wake of the ship about sixty miles to Cork. A poet who described this happening wrote the couplet:

Ní raibh aon rath ar an uisce ó Chorcaigh go Béara
Ó tairngeadh tríd an bradán gléigeal.[1]

No fish were said to have since been caught in the sea-route through which the corpse was dragged.

In Sweden, Miss Louise Hagberg tells us, if a corpse were carried over cultivated ground or over lakes, they became thereby unfruitful, and crop-growing fields lost their vegetation. She also says that during the Middle Ages those persons over whose lands a corpse was carried unlawfully had the right to compensation; in Västergötland anybody who carried a corpse across the land of another, without the permission of the owner, rendered himself liable to a prescribed fine.

Thus, the funeral-boundary customs in the Cork-Kerry area, which have died out only in comparatively recent times, seem to fit into the wider pattern of custom and superstition devised to give protection against the magical evil power associated with corpses.

2. Wearing Clothes for the Dead

In the year 1918 or so, an uncle of mine died in the townland of Fehanagh, in the parish of Tuosist, in southwest Kerry. This is my native parish. Jerry Sullivan was my uncle's name; he died at the age of sixty-four. I was fifteen years old at the time, and was spending some weeks of my summer holidays at my uncle's when he became ill and died. I was allowed to remain in the house during the illness, wake, and funeral.

It is still the immemorial custom in that parish to get a suit of clothes specially made by a local tailor when a person dies. The suit is not worn by the corpse in the coffin. Still, it is intended

[1] There has been no luck on the water from Cork to Béara
Since the gleaming salmon was dragged through it.

764 294 292 specifically for the dead person; I will describe in a moment the use to which it is put. Even though the dead person had a new suit of clothes at the time of his death, which he had never worn, but which he had ordered and got made for himself, this suit will not serve the purpose I mention, after his death. Still another new suit must be ordered immediately the person dies, and must be ready for wear on the Sunday following his death. There are certain rules which are *de rigeur* as far as the suit is concerned: (a) it must not be made to measure—the tailor would know most of the people of the parish and would have made clothes for many of them from time to time; when, therefore, a suit is ordered by the relatives of the man who has died, the tailor knows fairly well what the measurements of the deceased were, and makes the suit accordingly; (b) the material used in making the suit must be of good quality—otherwise the dead man will not be properly clad in the next world; (c) the suit must be complete in every detail; (d) it must not be tried on to see if it fits. Stories about events which followed a disregard for these rules will be referred to later.

764 292 When the clothes for my deceased uncle reached the house from the tailor on the Saturday evening after the burial, an interesting ritual was carried out, according to local custom. I remember the evening quite well; it was a very fine summer, and the mountains all around the valley were bathed by the rays of the setting sun. A neighbouring woman, named Mrs. Healy, who lived next door, came to the house of my late uncle at dusk, and asked his wife, children, and myself, to leave. We went some distance away from the house into a field. I heard afterwards from my aunt and from her children that Mrs. Healy then carried out the following rites: She was alone in the house, as I have said, and she first laid out the clothes, garment by garment, on the back of a kitchen chair, which was in the middle of the floor; the underclothes were on top of the pile of clothes, then came the shirt, then the trousers, then the waistcoat, then the coat, then the socks and shoes, and finally the hat and walking-stick underneath. Having thus arranged them, she then called on my deceased uncle three times by name, using the following words: "Here are your clothes, Jerry Sullivan! Come for them, and may you wear them in the next world as they will be worn for you in this!" She then sat down by the fire for short time. She then arose, took the chair and the garments to the threshold of the kitchen, leading to the yard, and repeated the same call and words three times. Having sat at the fireside again for a while, she took the chair and clothes out into the yard, again called three times on the dead man, and returned to the house alone, closing the door behind her. Having allowed some little time to elapse, she went out into the yard, brought the chair and clothes into the kitchen, and put them as they were, in the room at the bottom of the kitchen until next morning.

When she had finished her task, which occupied about a half-hour, as far as I can remember, she called us back to the house, and we all had our evening meal, as if nothing unusual had happened.

Early next morning, at the dawn of day, before anyone else in the house was up, my cousin, the dead man's son, arose, and Mrs. Healy again arrived to complete her task. My cousin went out through the kitchen door, turned round, and knelt on the threshold. Mrs. Healy then placed the suit, still arranged on the chair, inside the open door. My cousin then asked her for each garment in turn, in the name of the dead person, and she handed them to him as he asked for them.

He later put on the suit for Mass, and wore it at the Divine Service and afterwards, until he returned home. Although there was a disparity of over thirty years in the ages of my cousin and that of his father, the resemblance caused by the unusual dress was striking. 764 292

This custom of wearing clothes for the dead is still quite strong in Tuosist. It is also practised either fully, or in varying degrees of decadence, in some of the surrounding parishes, as well as in the south-western part of the adjoining county of Cork. In the Dingle peninsula, further north, in West Kerry, the custom now is to bring a suit of clothes for the dead person in a parcel to Mass on the three prescribed Sundays. A suit of clothes which had already belonged to the deceased suffices for the fulfilment of the practice in some districts in the southwest of Ireland, where, as far as can be judged by the vigour of its survival, the custom had its stronghold. It is difficult to say whether the accounts of the wearing of clothes for the dead in Counties Cavan and Wexford, which I have been given, point to a country-wide distribution in olden times or to the practice having taken hold in these two widely separated counties through some other cause.

The elaborate ceremony carried out by Mrs. Healy after the death of my uncle, which I have described above, was confined to the first Saturday evening and Sunday morning. My cousin took off the suit on his return from Mass on that day, and wore it at Mass again on the two succeeding Sundays, without any preliminary ceremony. Even when a neighbour wears the clothes instead of some member of the household, he must return them to the house on each of the first two Sundays; he may retain them altogether after the third Sunday, if the immediate relatives so arrange. Otherwise they are given to some poor person to wear in the normal way. A neighbour is called upon to wear the clothes only when there is no relative of the deceased who can fulfil the custom, e.g., when the sons of the dead man have emigrated or are too young for the purpose. [602] [621]

Almost everybody in the parish of Tuosist, where, as I have said, the practice of wearing clothes for the dead at Mass on three consecutive Sundays after the interment is still faithfully carried out, is a Catholic, and a large congregation attends Mass every Sunday. After Mass, it is customary for the people to spend some time chatting near the church when Mass is over. They all notice that a certain young man from the parish, as the case may be, is dressed like an old man on three particular Sundays, but, knowing well that he is fulfilling the age-old custom referred to, they pass no comment on it. While the custom of wearing the clothes for adults is still strong in the parish, the Saturday evening and Sunday morning rituals have, however, now died out.

It is evident from the words used by Mrs. Healy in the Saturday evening ritual ("may you wear them in the next world as they will be worn for you in this") that the traditional and original intention of the making of a special suit of clothes in this manner was to provide the dead person with raiment in the afterworld. That the dead were believed to have some kind of continuing existence after passing from this life is also indicated by, among other things, the variety of goods which were buried in coffins with the dead: in Ireland, we have references to such things as food, pipes, tobacco, defensive weapons, tools or implements, watches and other jewellery, as well as money, being placed in coffins in former times. The practice was well-known in other countries also. Prior to the introduction of the special cerements for the bodies of the dead, which have come to be known in Catholic lands as habits, it was customary to fit out the dead for burial in their best clothes. Young unmarried girls were often dressed as brides in Northern Europe, 764 775 292

764 perhaps to indicate that they had become the spouses of Death itself. It is probable, therefore, that
775 the Irish practice of providing, as well as the habit, a normal type of new suit for the dead, is but
292 an extension of the burial of clothes with the corpse itself. The fact that it is pagan in its origin, yet is still carried out by devout Catholics in a parish like Tuosist, who wear the clothes for the dead at Mass on three Sundays after the death has taken place, shows both the tenacity of pre-Christian ideas concerning the afterworld and the easy way in which Pagan ideas and practices were in this, as in many other cases, clothed over with Christian raiment. Indeed, it is possible that the Church itself, may have been instrumental in getting the Catholics under their care to wear the clothes to Mass for a certain number of Sundays with the intention of reminding the congregation of the person who had died and of getting them to pray for his soul.

764 Stories about the displeasure and even the sufferings of the dead whenever the custom of wear-
292 ing special clothes for them was not properly carried out are legion in the areas where the practice was known. I have already mentioned some of the traditional rules which had to be observed in the making and the wearing of the suit. Disregard of any or all of these was believed to give offence to the dead, and the reaction of the deceased to such indifference or carelessness on the part of the living relatives forms the basis of most of the stories. A few examples will illustrate their trend.

764 A man whom I knew well died in Tuosist about thirty years ago. A cousin of his was asked to
787 wear the clothes for the dead man on the three Sundays after his burial, and he agreed to do so.
292 During the week after the first Sunday (on which day the suit was first worn to Mass), a friend of mine, a shoemaker in the district, told me that he had a very vivid dream. He dreamt that he was making his way home along a lonely by-road late at night, and at a certain place, where the dead man had often stacked turf, he saw the dead man sitting with his back to the fence at the roadside. The moon shone down on his face and the shoemaker had no difficulty in recognising him in the dream. Plucking up courage, he saluted the dead man.

"Good night, Dan," said the shoemaker.

"Good night, Tim," was the reply.

"How are you?" asked the shoemaker, knowing that he was dead.

"I'm all right, except for one thing," said the dead man. "They gave me a fine suit and a fine shirt and a fine hat"—and he indicated each garment in turn—"but look at the boots they gave me!" And he pointed at the tattered boots on his feet.

"I'll attend to that, Dan," said the shoemaker, and he bade the other good night and made his way home, very much frightened.

Next morning he awoke with vivid recollections of the strange dream he had had during the night. It was Sunday morning, so he knew that the dead man's cousin would be wearing the clothes for the deceased at Mass for the second time that day. The church was four miles from his home, and having walked the mountainous road to Mass, he joined the congregation at the cross-roads afterwards. Without saying anything to anybody concerning his dream, he kept on the look-out for the dead man's cousin, and when he saw him, the shoemaker went over to join the group of men who were chatting with him. The shoemaker quietly concentrated his attention on the boots which the cousin was wearing, and it did not take long to establish that they

were not new, but had, in fact, been made by the shoemaker himself for the dead man, who had worn them only once before his death. The dead man's wife had apparently thought that it was not necessary to order a new pair of boots to be made. The shoemaker had, however, promised the dead man to have the matter set right, so he quietly sent a message to the dead man's wife next day about his dream. She immediately ordered a new pair of shoes to be procured, and these were worn at Mass, along with the rest of the outfit, until the traditional rule had been fully observed.

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A friend of mine in the parish of Clanlawrence in County Cork told me the following story to illustrate how carefully the details of the practice must be observed. A woman in that parish had a son who died. She got a new suit made for him, to be worn at Mass on the three Sundays after his burial, and on the Saturday evening prior to the first Sunday she laid the suit (as Mrs. Healy had done when my uncle had died) on the back of a chair in the kitchen, sprinkled it with holy water, and called on the dead son to come for them. Having next placed them at the threshold of the kitchen, she finally left them for a short while in the yard, and sat by the fire for a moment, presumably to allow the dead son to come for the suit. Suddenly she heard something being thrown against the door and, on investigating, she found that it was the new waistcoat. She then remembered that she had deliberately refrained from putting her dead son's watch in the pocket, intending to keep it as a memento. Needless to say, she immediately put the watch in the waistcoat pocket and replaced the garment on the chair in the yard. There was no further disturbance.[1]

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[1] For general references to the custom mentioned in 1, see: När Döden Gästar, Louise Hagberg, Stockholm, 1937, pp. 331–379. Also, Über Krankheit, Tod und Jenseitsvorstellungen in Irland, Hans Hartmann, Halle, 1942, pp. 11–115; and Der Totenkult in Irland, by the same author, Heidelberg, 1952, pp. 15–17, 183.

[113]

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Relative age thus makes a difference in status in the local community. It fits one into a definite place in a scheme of values, and lastly, it equips one with a definite role in communal life which one can fill well or ill. 561

The conduct that reflects this state of affairs thrusts itself into the observer's view again and again in rural Ireland. One finds it wherever one meets the countrymen together. The relations between young and old in the community, like those between parent and child within the family, are understandable in the light of the roles of the broad age groups.

First, there is the matter of privilege and precedence. To an outsider there may seem little enough in the countryman's way of life to allow for such distinctions. But from within, that little looms much greater. The old fellows, the men of full status who head farms and farm-working corporations of sons—those who have turned or are about to turn over their control to a younger generation — are accorded a very real precedence. In their own houses we have seen it to be very great; in the community at large it is little less so. A farmer visiting another takes his place at the hearth seat, his sons lag behind and occupy the back of the room. When the community gathers in the wake-house to honour the dead, the places by the fire go to the old adult 'men' and 'women'; the 'boys and girls' must group themselves behind. They [574] [764]

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

In the treatment of death, one can see the social system of rural Ireland in the full perspective of its deep-rooted strength. In the flashes of poetic genius which seem so prone to trip from an Irish tongue, death acquires a deeper and more poignant meaning than many another racial tongue could give it. And so it is in the mundane, prosaic world of social life. The most important secular ceremony of rural life is the wake and funeral. In the crowds that come to the wake-house to pay their respects to the dead and condole with the living; in the long lines of marching figures, traps, jaunting cars and motor-cars that make a slow procession over the open roads from wake-house to church and from church to graveside, the observer glimpses an epitome of rural life in which all its values are mingled.

Kinship bonds are at their strongest. Traditional custom enforces upon the kindred important roles in laying out the dead, in carrying the coffin, in digging the grave, in keening him, in reciting funeral laments that are the last survivals of bardic elegies, in preparing entertainment for all comers, in which the dead man's survivors proudly affirm their place and his in the life of the community.

In all this the fairy-lore takes part. The banshee's cry is merely the funeral keen issued from a fairy voice. It signalizes death in the symbolic world just as the keen of the living signalizes living personal loss. It is the lament over common loss in a common cause, for relatives of the dead must greet each other with the keen at the wake-house.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

other with the keen at the wake-house.

The goods of household and farm suffer incorporation into emotional symbolism once more; precautions must be taken to protect them and prevent their going beyond with the lost one. Time and place of death are clothed with a hundred supernatural associations.

The reciprocities which make up friendship and give status in the community get full play. Every man, in death, can command a multitude. To stay away, to make no recognition of the day, is to give deadly affront. Every 'right Irishman' turns and walks, if only a few steps, along with the procession. In towns, all the blinds upon the street are drawn and shop-fronts are boarded, in recognition. In the Gaelic tongue, indeed, one and the same word does service for both funeral and multitude. And in the fairy-lore "there is never a funeral but the other people are at it, too, walking along behind". Many a countryman, steeped in the old lore, sees in a whirlwind or puff of mist a *socraid sidhe* or fairy-funeral.

He knows thereby that somewhere the chief expression of traditional social life is calling the countrymen together through a whole countryside for a re-enactment, both solemn and gay, of their sentiments about their fellows and about their view of life and death and destiny.

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9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 instance the stranger must not be allowed to leave the house that way lest he take the luck of the house with him. In the [764] Aran Islands it was the custom to carry out the corpse through the back door.

The deal door has not long since replaced, in remote spots, the wickerwork frame, lined with straw, or the hanging straw mat, and I have been told of houses where a creel offered the only protection. There may be only one small window, towards the hearth-end, for the open door provides light. [281] A dried sheepskin was a substitute for glass, and I have come across windows where a sheet of glass was sealed with clay without any frame. Where the hole was open, a handful of hay or a wicker shutter closed it at nights. These conditions help us to understand why the window or windows, even now, tend to be restricted to the side sheltered from the prevailing winds.

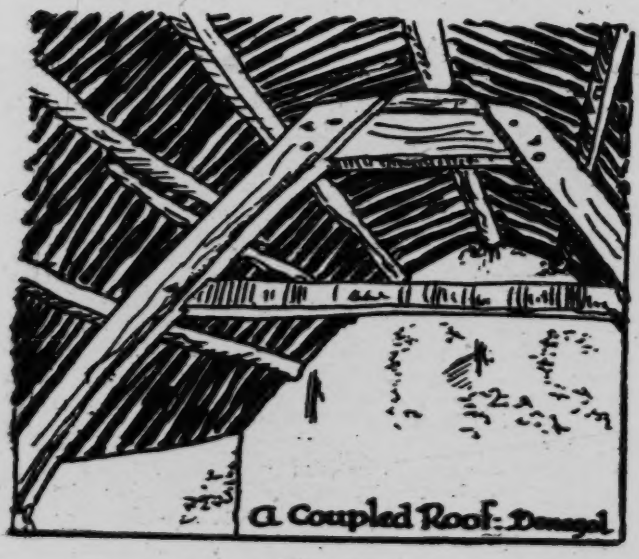

Fig. 20.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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offending person. Similar stones have been used to work beneficent magic in the case of expectant mothers. Here the symbolism may be that of the child in the womb, but there are other cases where it is obviously phallic. Sympathetic magic would appear to be the explanation of another custom, that of carrying away in a cloth and making into various concoctions, some of which were drunk, the earth from the grave of a holy man. The drink was regarded as a cure for human sins or for disease in cattle.

The megaliths themselves are known to have been held in veneration as givers of fertility and curative agents. The same virtues attach to certain solitary stones, for instance some holy wells have "healing stones" which are used to touch the affected parts of the body. Standing stones with a perforation ("holed-stones") are said to have been used in sealing marriage contracts. Megaliths are also considered the haunts of fairies, which, some students affirm, are to be regarded as ancestral spirits inhabiting the burial places and awaiting an opportunity to be born again. Alternatively it is thought that belief in fairies is a folk memory of ancient peoples of small stature. It is hardly necessary to say that belief in fairies is firmly held in many parts of the country: I have seen quite recently boys dressed in girls' clothes as a protection against fairy theft, for the "wee people" are liable to exchange their "changelings" for healthy boys—a belief which is perhaps an attempt to explain the high mortality of male as compared with female children.

It has more than once been my experience to be refused permission to excavate megalithic monuments from the owner's belief that bad luck would follow. Country people will not touch the trees that grow on ancient burial sites, for instance they will not even use fallen branches as fuel. This reluctance to interfere with the abodes of the dead provides a charitable explanation of the neglect from which many Christian burial grounds suffer. Incidentally it is worth remarking that archæologists have often shown by their discoveries that hazel wood and hazel nuts played a consider-

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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able part in the ceremonies of megalithic burial: we remember the significance attached to hazel nuts in the Hallowe'en games of divination (Chapter 17).

The ancient raths or forths, earthen enclosures around old homesteads, are also favourite haunts of fairies, and many are the tales of mysterious happenings in their neighbourhood at night, and of signs of habitation and sweet music issuing from them. Protection from fairies is believed to be obtained by possession of a black-hafted knife, while oatmeal or oat-cakes are also specifics against their malign influence. From fairies as from witches the supreme hour of peril to mortals is at the eves of Beltane, Midsummer and All Hallows. Cattle afflicted with disease were believed to be "elf-shot"—the belief is not entirely dead—and flint arrowheads were produced as proof of the attack. The cure was to give the affected animal a drink of the water in which the arrow had been placed. Among other archæological relics the polished stone axes of the Neolithic and Bronze ages are known as thunderbolts and are accredited with healing powers, and the small spinning-whorls are termed fairy mill-stones. As Arthur Mitchell writes of Scotland: "It is believed that stone celts assist the birth of children; that they increase the milk of cows; that they cure the diseases of the eye; that they protect the houses in which they are kept from lightning; and that they have many other such marvellous virtues. It is believed that, as they have a sort of supernatural origin, they may reasonably be supposed to have supernatural powers."

When food is taken out of doors it is a common belief that some must be left behind for the fairies, otherwise the dreaded "hungry grass" will grow; and the countryman will often spill a portion of his drink as a perhaps unconscious libation to the wee folk. Their activities are peculiarly dangerous to cattle and to butter-making. Among the charms designed to secure a good supply of butter in the churn we find the use of a horse-shoe, of a rusty nail from a coffin or the hand of a corpse, of rowan branches, salt, a live turf, or a cross made of

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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776 veronica leaves. In the North it is considered unlucky for a
789 person to enter a house where churning is taking place without
[177] "giving a brash," that is lending a hand at the churn-staff. In the words of a countryman in the west, "Queer things do happen to butter." Fairy tales are full of cattle and cattle-stealing: so are the epic tales. Writers of last century tell of cows that might be seen "with rags about their horns as a charm against the gentry," or gentle-folk, a name often applied to the fairies.

824 This brings us to the fairy or gentry thorns, skeaghs, or lone bushes, that is the solitary whitethorn trees which are regarded with dread. These trees, which must be counted by the thousand, are said "never to have been planted but to have grown of their own accord." They may be found on ancient monuments or alongside holy wells but the great majority are scattered through the fields, and it is worthy of notice that the cult is at least as strong in the Protestant north-east as in other parts of the country. A venerable thorn, pink-flowering, stands under my window as I write and casts its shadow into the Senate Room of the University. But no one will remove it or even lop its branches, and the story goes that when the buildings were being erected, the plans had to be changed in order that the thorn should not be interfered with. If a lone tree surrounded by half a dozen scientific departments has claimed such respect it can be imagined in what awe the country thorns are held! See Tailpiece.

It has recently been suggested that the veneration of thorn trees was a Belgic custom introduced to Ireland some 2,000 years ago, but it seems more likely that as with sacred stones and wells we should look even further away in time and space to Mediterranean origins and regard the cult of trees as part of the nature worship connected with man's first use of the Irish soil. Certain thorns dedicated to Irish saints figure also
[164] in ceremonies of burial: when funerals pass by they halt and stones are placed beside the thorn until they have become cairns. Wayside cairns, in the form of memorial monuments,

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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Wayside cairns in the form of memorial monuments 824
line the roads to the graveyards of Aran. On thorns at cross roads it is the custom in Co. Wexford to hang small crosses, [211]
made of coffin wood, as the funeral procession passes by. [764]

We cannot deal at any length with the superstitious 764
practices which cling so tenaciously to death and burial: they recall the customs of many other regions, such as Brittany, where the old megalithic cult was strong and seems to have lived on in obsessions about death and accompanying notions of re-birth. The anxiety to be buried with relatives reminds us of the strength of the blood-tie, and " bestows even on death a feeling of social interest." It is an Irish belief that the dead live on in the graveyard, and that the last person buried acts as servant to the others, a belief which not long ago led to disputes as to which of two bodies to be buried should be interred first. There are certain old graveyards where women only are said to be buried, and no living woman will enter them. On Innishmurray there are separate [766]
graveyards for men and women. Unbaptised infants were generally interred in special burial grounds, some of which appear to be prehistoric cairns. There is no need to add to the many accounts that have been written of the keening of the dead and of wakes. In connexion with wakes we need only refer to the tricks, pastimes and games which were their accompaniment. The dramatic games were known under such titles as " The Walls of Troy," " Short Castle," " Building the Ship," " Turning the Spit," " Selling the Pig," " Building the Fort," " The Horse Fair," " The Mock Marriage " and " Shuffle the Brogue." While some seem to have been for amusement only, in others it is difficult not to see sex-symbolism and fertility-rites. In recent times the wake-games [786]
have often degenerated into licence and drinking. Maria Edgeworth tells us that " more matches were made at wakes than at weddings."

When going to a funeral it was customary, in parts of the west until the beginning of the present century, to carry some salt in the pocket in order to avert evil influences. Arensberg quotes the belief that " there is never a funeral but the other

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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● 764 people are at it, too, walking along behind." In the Aran Islands, as we saw in Chapter 7, the corpse was carried out through the back door, and the front doors of all houses were closed as the funeral passed by. In Co. Mayo the coffin was carried three times round the church, sunwise, and pipes [782] filled with tobacco were left, presumably as offerings, on the grave. To prevent the spirit returning to the house of the living, it used to be thought necessary to apply a "lick" of whitewash around the door and window openings. The association of white stones and white shells with graves is [822] probably another prehistoric survival. Many of the megalithic cairns were covered with white quartz stones. It often happens that old superstitions and customs survive under the guise of children's games, and we shall have something to say about toys and games in the following chapter.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
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141 (D). *Proportional Measurements.*—The proportional measurements are of some interest, as differing, in some respects, not only from those of the Aran Islanders, but also from the accepted canons, and from the proportions obtained by Quetelet, Gould, and others, in their investigations on several European peoples. The stature is taken as equaling 100.

FACE.

Here, as was observed to be the case last year, the proportion borne by the face to the height is very great, the total face-length being to the stature as 7·48 to 100 (the canon being 6·60).

Nose.—This is not very constant in its relations to the body-height, varying between 2·47 and 3·72, and giving an average of 3·30, nearly exactly that of the French canon. It may be stated that the proportion is less than three in only five instances, and out of the forty measured, one only is below 2·80.

UPPER LIMB.

Span.—This nearly corresponds with the average Irish proportion. In every case it is greater than the stature, but in one instance is very nearly equal to it. The average proportion is 104·95, thus testifying to the length of limb. The extremes were 100·72 and 109·14. The mean span of the Aran series was 101·94, and that of Gould's series of 827 Irish soldiers 104·6.

Hand.—This ranges between 10·76 and 12·08, but as a rule is slightly below the French canon of 11·50, the average being 11·33.

Forearm.—This section of the upper limb is subject to considerable variation. On the whole it is long, but not to so great a degree as in the case of the Aran Islanders, where it was 15·18, while here it is 15·03; this, with the greater proportion of the span to the stature, is probably due to the burlier build of the Bofin men.

141 764 172 (E). *Crania.*—In addition to the observations made on the living subject, the measurements of a series of crania, the first ever put on record from this island,[1] were obtained at St. Colman's Church, in Knock townland. As they could not be removed at the time of my first visit, I was forced to measure them on the spot, and, as it turned out afterwards, it was well that this precaution had been taken, as, on revisiting the place some time after, in the hope of being able to obtain some of them, I found that they had all disappeared, having in the meantime been removed to some place of concealment.

[1] Since this was written Professor A. C. Haddon has read before the Academy a Paper on some crania obtained by him from Inishbofin: *antea*, p. 311.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

The specimens, about twenty in number, were piled in a heap in a small recess near the east window, and were all in a very bad state of preservation, being much weathered from long exposure, in addition to which they had suffered such extensive mutilations that only eleven, all calvaria, were in a suitable condition to allow of measurement; the others were merely shattered fragments of the cranial bones, presenting no feature of interest except their thinness.

The following description of those examined is extracted from the entries made in my note-book at the time.

The specimens examined are very uniform in their characters, which are, in the main, as follows:—

Norma verticalis.—The cranial outline is a short but very even oval, sometimes showing an approach to the quadrate in form, as the frontal region is flattened, and the frontal and parietal eminences are well-marked.

Norma lateralis.—The profile rises almost perpendicularly to the culmination of the frontal eminences, as the glabella and superciliary ridges project very slightly, and the frontal sinuses are not large. The upper part of the curve sweeps evenly backwards, and dips down rather suddenly below the lambda, in some cases projecting again below.

Norma facialis.—The forehead is seen to be broad, but not of any great height, and the superior borders of the orbits are nearly level or but slightly curved.

The muscular markings, as the inion superior curved line, and mastoids, are in four cases (Nos. 1, 4, 6, and 11) strong; in all the others they are very slight.

The sutures are rather complex, and by the very considerable amount of obliteration they have undergone, would seem to have belonged to persons of rather advanced age.

Pterion.—In every instance this is of the H type, but in two cases it contains small epactals.

Indices.—The crania are, without exception, mesaticephalic, having a mean cephalic index of 77, with extremes of 75·5 and 79·2. The vertical index can only be obtained in three cases, owing to the extremely shattered state of the specimens. All are tapeino-cephalic, the figures being 70·5, 75·3, and 71·9. The auriculo-vertical height is obtainable only on the same crania as the basi-bregmatic.

Curves.—The longitudinal curves, measurable in five instances, in three of which the frontal arc exceeded the parietal, and, in all, it is greater than the occipital. The parietal arc exceeds the occipital in four cases, and is less than it in one.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
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V

585 "straw-boys" go round with long straw masks on, and if they do not get either money or liquor will threaten to break the windows and furniture of the house. The women marry very young, from fifteen
582 years upwards; and, if not settled in life by twenty or so, they usually emigrate.

Infants are given butter immediately after birth, and are carefully
844 watched, lest they should be "taken away" or changed. For some similar reason a parturient woman has a string tied round the wrist or one of the fingers. All the wood in a house is carefully put outside if
763 the death of one of the inmates is thought to be imminent; and if it should occur the neighbours dread to give wood to make the coffin, as they believe that the person who does so will be the next to die; and if the plank of which the coffin is to be made is not taken down from the loft where it generally is, before the person dies, no inducement can make them use it for the purpose. The people never bury their
● 764 dead on a Monday, nor on the day of the week in which the Feasts of the Holy Innocents has fallen for that year. They have a great
[762] horror of suicides, and believe that if one were to be buried in the graveyard it would cause the other corpses to turn over on their faces.

A wake is held the night before the funeral, on those who have died abroad or been lost at sea, when the news arrives; but owing to
[178] the influence brought to bear on the people by the clergy in this matter, it is now only attended by relatives of the deceased, and the character of the ceremony is much altered, most of the old games, the mock marriage, &c., being altogether obsolete, while the insobriety, formerly common, is now a thing of the past. At the funeral the coffin
[482] is carried out the back door, and is followed by the mourners. On reaching the graveyard it is carried thrice round the old church in the direction of the sun, and as soon as the grave is reached all those attending the funeral scatter and go to pray at the graves of their own relatives, which, having done, they raise the keen, beginning at the person farthest from the open grave.

The Rev. E. O'Growney, who has generously placed at my disposal a number of notes taken during a visit to these islands, thus describes a funeral he witnessed in Inishbofin:—"The old Irish funeral *caoine* is still used in its full perfection. I happened to be engaged in the church of St. Colman, deciphering a peculiar Latin inscription there, when a large number of people, chiefly women, brought the body of an infant for interment. While the body was being interred the women
764 scattered about the churchyard, each going to the grave of her own
533 friends. Those farthest from the newly-made grave began a low

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
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monotonous chant of three or four lines; the last phrase of each line was very often *go deo deo-deo* (= for aye, aye, aye), the vowel sound of *e* easily accommodating itself to the prolonged chant. Another termination was *nios-mó-mó-mó* (= no more, more, more). I still recollect one touching line of the dirge: it was—*tá mo theachín follamh go deo-deo-deo*, 'my little house is empty for evermore, more, more.' Unfortunately, I know nothing about music, but the chant reminded me of the fourth line of the old air of 'The Blackbird.'"

Owing to the stone of the island not being easily worked the grave-stones are usually rough, shapeless slabs, or are rudely chipped into the form of a cross, while the rest of the grave is covered with flat stones.

A large number of the men formerly went as harvesters to England and Scotland, where some of the young girls still go as servants; but very few do so now, though they say the harvesting paid well. It is more the fashion now to go to America even for a few years; and instances have occurred of people shutting up their houses, leaving all their furniture and utensils as they were, going off to the United States for three or four years, and then coming back, resuming possession, and falling into all the old ways and customs as if nothing very unusual had occurred. It is quite a common occurrence for young men to go to America for seven or eight years (generally to the neighbourhood of Pittsburg to work at the foundries there), at the end of that time to return home, settle down, and get married. Many of the girls go to Scotland, as servants, for five or six months of the year to assist their parents at home.

3. *Food.*—The dietary is much more varied than that of many of the inhabitants of the inland districts; it consists largely of fish of various kinds, potatoes, and home-made bread. Flesh meat is rarely tasted except at Christmas or some other great occasion, when a little mutton may be eaten, but fowl and geese are occasionally used. The fish which forms the staple of the diet is eaten fresh in spring and summer time, and large supplies of it are salted and dried in the sun for the winter's use; the kinds cured are mainly ling, sea-bream, and glassan.

Butter and cheese are not used; and eggs, though forming part of the regular food, are mostly employed as a purchasing medium for tea, sugar, tobacco, &c., at the principal shop, whence they are forwarded to Westport.

Tea has come greatly into use, and is taken in large quantities with

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

58 not, like an Inishbofin man, consider himself disgraced, nor is he inconsolable.

Engaged couples or newly married people often come in for an amount of attention from the children of the neighbourhood, which, however flattering it may be, is decidedly embarrassing; they are followed about and cheered whenever they appear together. Weddings
585 are occasions of family festivities, and are usually followed by a dance.
533 "Straw-boys" go round to the house on these occasions and take part
292 in the dancing. They are disguised in tall conical-shaped straw masks, adorned with strips of red and green cloth, white shirts decorated with coloured ribbons, and white or red petticoats. The band is headed by a captain and a mate, who enter the house first and declare that they are shipwrecked sailors, and that they have come to dance at the wedding; the captain then dances with the bride, the mate with the bridesmaid, and the rest of the band with the other girls. It is usual to treat the straw-boys to drink, but they often refuse it, and never demand money, or indulge in any rowdy conduct.

591 The young couple usually set up house on their own account, except in the case of the youngest son, who inherits his parents' house and property, in which case the bride goes to live with her people-in-law.

763 When a person is dying, windows and doors are thrown open, and the clock (if there be one) stopped; it is considered unlucky or im-
777 proper for any of those in the house to cry until after the death has actually occured.

764 Wakes are still held in this district, and many of the old observances and games are kept up; but owing to the discouragement of these by the clergy, the people show a great reluctance to give any information on the matter. A good deal of drinking usually takes place on these occasions.

The funeral customs have undergone some change during the past thirty years, but much still remains that is worthy of notice. A grave is not usually dug until the coffin reaches the graveyard, if begun before hand it is never dug on a Monday, or commenced at least, but a start is made, if necessity compels, by raising a few sods on Sunday. It is believed to be unlucky to bury a corpse on New Year's Day, an act
[777] which is thought to bring misfortune to the whole neighbourhood.

The coffin is usually taken out the back door of the house, and conveyed to the cemetery by the longest route. At the graveyard the *caoine* is raised by the women immediately after the religious ceremony

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

is concluded. The burial grounds are kept much better than in many other parts of the West; and on Inishkea, as well as in the Mullet, it it is customary to decorate the graves with large white pebbles, and to place at the head a neatly made wooden cross. A curious custom exists, some instances of which were observed at Tarmoncarra, of placing tobacco pipes on the graves; these are the pipes which were left unused after the wake. What the reason is for so placing them could not be ascertained, but it is considered extremely unlucky to remove them.

Unbaptised infants are interred in separate burying grounds by themselves, several of which are in the district.

It is now no longer customary for the people of the Mullet to bury their dead in Inisglora, the last instance of this having occured over thirty years ago. Formerly many families used regularly to make use of this island as a cemetery, always taking a body over from a point of the mainland opposite, which was stated by tradition to have once been connected with the main, but to have got separated afterwards by a channel which has gradually widened.

Maxwell,[1] writing in 1832, says—"There are no people on earth more punctilious in the interment of their dead than the peasantry of this remote district. A strange and unaccountable custom exists of burying different families resident on the main in island cemeteries, and great difficulty and often great danger attends the conveyance of a corpse to its insulated resting place. No inducement will make these wild people inter a body apart from the tomb of its fathers, and, if a boat will live, the corpse will be transported to the family tomb. At times the weather renders this impracticable, but the deceased is kept for many days unburied in the hope that the storm may subside; and only when frail mortality evinces unequivocal tokens of decay will the relatives consent to unite its dust with the ashes of a stranger."

A considerable number of migratory labourers leave this district annually to do harvesting work in England, on the proceeds of which work they in part support themselves during the winter. The number doing thus has decreased somewhat of late years.

There is not much to be said about the everyday mode of life. The men fish and attend to their holdings; the women manage household affairs and assist at field work in times of pressure. The people are early risers in the summer months, and, as a rule, retire to bed early, few lights being seen in the hamlets after nine or ten p.m.

[1] Maxwell, W. H., "Wild sports of the West," chap. xix.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

when asked why he had not washed behind his ears, replied "'twas too far west!' Death within the year is said to be the fate in Mayo of the man who lengthens a house by adding to the west end.[1] In the old style, as we shall see in the next chapter, houses of more than one storey are rare, though half-lofts or sleeping lofts in the roof lit by a small gable window are fairly common.

A very general feature throughout the north and west is the presence of two doors in the kitchen, one opposite the other (Fig. 8). Only one—the front door—is in regular use: the back door is reserved for days when the wind 'blows contrairy'. Around it more superstition is gathered. A stranger must not be allowed to leave the house by the back door lest he take the luck of the house with him. In the Aran Islands a corpse was always carried out to the graveyard through the back door and the front door of all houses in the clachan was closed as the funeral procession passed by.[2] The usual explanation of the opposite doors is that they made it possible to regulate the draught for the open fire. This arrangement is characteristic of pastoral areas in western and southern Europe, such as Andalusia and the Roman Campagna. A seventeenth century visitor to Ireland writes: 'the hearth is placed in the middle of the room. The smoke goes through no particular place, but breaks through every part between the sods and wattles of the house, which commonly is no bigger than an overgrown pigstye, to which they have two doors, one always shut on that side where the winds blow'.[3] When chimney flues were added the dispersal of the smoke was facilitated so that the back door tended to go out of use. Nowadays it is often blocked or converted into a window or wall-cupboard. In the traditional kitchen-byre the flagged passage between the doors served as a path for livestock, and the cow was driven out through the back door after milking. I found an interesting relic of this in Co. Armagh, in the custom of taking every new calf, and also any animals purchased at the fair, through the house for luck. In Kerry, 'down to the present day, some houses are the scene of the

[1] C. R. Browne, *The Mullet*.
[2] A. C. Haddon and C. R. Browne, *The Aran Islands*.
[3] 'A Tour in Ireland in 1672–74', *J.C.H.A. Soc.*, 10 (1904), 96.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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a late Neolithic burial cairn at Lyles Hill near Belfast I found tens of thousands of potsherds which had been collected from domestic refuse and thrown into the cairn during the course of its erection.[1] The broken plates which may be seen exposed on the graves in some old burial-grounds in Co. Mayo are probably placed there in continuation of ancient practice. The breaking of pots is one of the elements in Hallowe'en pranks—one might almost say rites—and again we notice the association with the dead, for All-Hallows is the time when the dead are believed to return to their homes.

It would appear that by breaking a pot you broke its spirit; and by transference the power of the dead to do harm. Readers will recall the significant lines from *Hamlet*, referring to the suicide of Ophelia: 'Her death was doubtful . . . for charitable prayers, shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her.'[2] In some places in south-west England potsherds figure in the 'lent crocking' rites at Easter: like Easter eggs they are symbols of fertility. The association of fertility and decay, of life and death, comedy and tragedy, is clearly displayed in the wake games which are described in Chapter XX. This association, we note in passing, is ever-present in the mind of the Irish countryman, and the juxtaposition gives dramatic quality to the work of many Anglo-Irish playwrights.

This is not the place to enlarge on the technology of early pot-making, but it may be observed that the designs, fabric and finish of the Neolithic family of pottery in Ireland were far superior to those of succeeding periods: indeed it was not until wheel-made pots found local markets in the medieval towns that technically superior vessels were made in this country. In late prehistoric and early historic times the wealthy were able to import fine wares in small quantities from the continent, but the peasant homes over most of Ireland apparently did without pottery—the Gaelic word for potter is a loan-word—and vessels of wood, metal or leather did duty for the now universal imported 'delph'. The Dutchman, Gerard Boate, writing in 1645, said that 'the use of earthen vessels hath been very rare among them, and to the most part unknown even

[1] E. E. Evans, *Lyles Hill: a late Neolithic site in Co. Antrim*, H.M.S.O. (1953).
[2] *Hamlet*, Act V, Sc. 1.

[facing p. 163]

Salruck graveyard, Co. Galway, with tobacco pipes left

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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PLATE 14

764

Graves,

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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763 observe the correct procedure in laying out the corpse, generally on a table or a door. A plate containing tobacco or salt was placed on the corpse and sometimes a turf, which was believed to prevent decomposition, a transference from the observed preservative qualities of the bogs.

764 786 Although a great deal of information on the wakes which followed has been collected, it is difficult to obtain precise details about the wake games because of their apparent obscenity. Some of them survive as innocent games in districts where wakes have not been entirely suppressed, but it should be stressed that the full ritual of the traditional wake games was carried out in innocence: 'the peasantry who practised them had no idea of outraging propriety or religion in their performance, holding an unquestioning faith that such observances were right and proper at wakes, whilst under any other circumstances they would shrink with horror from such indelicate exhibitions'.[1] Moreover, they were generally 'reserved for the deaths of old people who had survived the ordinary span of life, or young children who could not be looked upon as an irreparable loss.'[2]

Apart from a great variety of informal amusements which were traditional at wake gatherings—riddles, jokes, singing, dancing, horse-play, tricks, feats of strength or agility, wrestling and so on—a list of 190 specific wake games has been collected by Seán Ó Súilleabháin, and it is 'of necessity incomplete.'[3] Some of them were dramatic performances of considerable complexity; and one recalls the Irishman's traditional skill in dramatization. In Kilkenny the principal game was the *frannsa*, a mock ceremony during which several young folk were 'married' by a mock priest, usually a weaver or a tailor, who was dressed in straw and wore a huge straw rope as a stole. 'After each couple was married, he put them to bed in a corner of the room, sprinkled them with water and gave them plain advice about their future conduct as man and wife.'[4] We need not be surprised that, after this initiation, in the words of

[1] J. G. A. Prim, *J.R.S.A.I.* (1853), 334.
[2] J. G. A. Prim, loc. cit.
[3] S. Ó Súilleabháin, *A Handbook of Irish Folklore*, 602.
[4] J. O'Donovan, *J.R.S.A.I.* (1858), 31.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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WEDDINGS AND WAKES

Maria Edgeworth, 'more matches were made at wakes than at weddings.' The most frank account of the nature of the games I have come across reads as follows: 'They were placed under the conduct of some peasant of the district who excelled in rustic wit and humour, who went under the title of "Borekeen", and whose orders were carried into force by subordinate officers, all arrayed in fantastic habiliments. The "game" usually first performed was termed "Bout", and was joined in by men and women, who all acted a very obscene part which cannot be described. The next scene generally was termed "Making the Ship', with its several parts of "laying the keel", forming the "stem and stern", and erecting "the mast", the latter of which was done by a female using a gesture and expression, proving beyond doubt that it was a relic of Pagan rites. The "Bull and the Cow" was another game strongly indicative of a Pagan origin, from circumstances too indelicate to be particularized. The game called "Hold the Light", in which a man is blindfolded and flogged, has been looked upon as a profane travestie of the passion of our Lord; and religion might also be considered as brought into contempt by another of the series, in which a person caricaturing a priest, and wearing a rosary, composed of small potatoes strung together, enters into conflict with the "Borekeen", and is put down and expelled from the room by direction of the latter . . . "Turning the Spit" and "Selling the Pig" are the names of two others of those games; in that called "Drawing the Ship out of the Mud" the men engaged actually presented themselves before the rest of the assembly, females as well as males, in a state of nudity, whilst in another game the female performers attired themselves in men's clothes and conducted themselves in a very strange manner.'[1] From other sources we learn that boys and girls, in some games, wore hides and appeared representing bulls and cows.

Parallels to these practices can be adduced from the so-called simple societies in many parts of the world, and as in Ireland Christian missionaries found it very difficult to suppress the rituals enacted between death and burial. The keening of the corpse likewise carries us through time to the earliest emotions of human societies faced with the mystery of death. The liberal

[1] J. G. A. Prim, loc. cit.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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Many superstitious customs pursued the corpse to the burying ground. The chairs on which the coffin rested were shaken in all directions before it was lifted off, and it was customary for those following the coffin to take some protective substance such as salt in the pocket, for 'there is never a funeral but the other people are at it, too, walking along behind'.[2] With the

[1] Max Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa*, 24.
[2] C. M. Arensberg, *The Irish Countryman*, 216.

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idea no doubt of deceiving the spirit of the dead the coffin was carried to the graveyard by the longest route, preferably a disused track, and the procession made a sunwise circle around some place or object on the way, a cross, a church-site, a lone thorn tree or a crossroads. In Connacht, stones were added to small cairns which stood at stopping places on the way. In many areas tradition tells that the coffin was carried three times around the ruined church that stands in many old graveyards. Dr. Browne's account of the procedure in the graveyard was written of Ballycroy, Co. Mayo: 'On reaching the cemetery the coffin is carried to the place where it is to be interred, and then the people all scatter to kneel and pray at the graves of their own relatives. After this, new pipes and tobacco are served out to those present, who sit down and smoke. After the pipes have been smoked, the weeds are cleared away and the grave is dug. It may be worthy of remark here that a grave is not dug on Monday if possible, and if for any reason a burial has to be made on that day, a sod is raised the day before. After the grave has been dug and the coffin lowered into it, a band of women gather round it and sing the *caione*, which here has not degenerated into mere discordant wailing . . . but is often really very musical and plaintive. When this has been done, the mourners are sprinkled with holy water and then engage in prayer: after which the grave is filled in, covered over with rough stones, often white in colour, and the unused pipes placed upon it.'[1] (Plate 14.) In Achill Island I have seen plates, which presumably once held food, left on the graves, and there are firm traditions of food and tools being placed in the coffin. 'Our neighbour John Ryan', wrote W. R. Le Fanu, 'put two pairs of shoes in the coffin of his wife—a strong one for bad weather, a light pair for ordinary wear.'[2] It was believed that the last person to be buried would be placed in charge of the other dead, and would have to carry water for them. This is the reason given for the fights which, it is said, sometimes broke out at the graveyard between rival funeral parties as to which corpse should be buried first, but it seems that fighting not infrequently occurred on the occasion of graveyard gatherings, and I have heard it justified

[1] C. R. Browne, *Ballycroy*.
[2] W. R. Le Fanu, *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, 86.

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by the tradition that 'there must be blood spilt at a funeral'. In some parts of the country there were separate graveyards for men and women, and the prohibition against burying the wrong sex lasted into the present century in Inishmurray, Co. Sligo.

Many gruesome superstitions gather around old graveyards, yet it is to them that the old people wish to be taken, however neglected and overcrowded they may be. As one observer put it: 'The anxiety to be interred with their deceased relatives bestows even on death a feeling of social interest.'[1] I have referred to the Saints' Beds—small stone enclosures in very old graveyards which were perhaps oratories—and their power of curing barrenness. Bits of skulls, too, or scrapings of the moss growing on them, were sought as cures for various ailments, and the clay from the graves of priests was considered efficacious, with fine impartiality, for human sins and for the diseases of cattle. Such cures were apparently mixed with water and taken as medicine, and as part of the ritual the cloth in which they were removed was replaced on the grave. A potent love charm is said to have been worked by wrapping around the desired person, when sleeping, a long strip of skin removed from a corpse, and a dead man's hand, thrust into the milk, was, as a last resort, a sure way of getting the cream to rise.

[1] T. C. Croker, *Researches in the South of Ireland*, 167.

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Plate XIV.

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Rath-Blathmaic. "Broc-sidh" and "Sheelah".

"Peists"
Dysert-O'Dea

1910 "Ghost Stone". Clonlara. JJW

[Facing p. 202]

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MacNamara.[17] A certain Flann MacDonnchaidh, a very poor man, lived near the bush long ago, and dreamt "again and again" that, if he went to the Bald Bridge, Droichiod maol-na-Luimneaigh (Ball's Bridge in Limerick City), he would find money and make his fortune. He went there and walked up and down until he was worn out. He was on the point of going away when a cobbler asked him what he was about, and he told his story. The cobbler laughed, and told how he himself had dreamed of finding treasure under a bush at a place called Skaghvickencrow, but had wasted no time in looking for it.[18] MacDonnchaidh returned home, dug, and found a flag with an inscription in an unknown tongue. He left the stone on his hearth, and, as no local scholar could read it, he troubled no more about the matter. Years went by, and one night a wandering schoolmaster asked for hospitality, and of course got it. The "angel unawares" translated the inscription as "one side is more lucky than the other." Next day, when his guest was gone, MacDonnchaidh dug, and found so much money as to make rich men of himself and his descendants.[19]

The only tale of church treasure I have met with is that the silver bells of either Killeany or Kilmoon church lie hidden in the brook between their ruins called from the legend Owenacluggan.

Funerals and graveyards.—Though I have frequently attended funerals of persons of all classes and denominations in many parts of Clare, I have very little to tell of the ceremonies. Sometimes I have seen spades crossed on a grave, and long ago saw three crosses, made of twigs from a hawthorn tree in a graveyard, placed on a coffin. The body is usually carried feet foremost round the graveyard sunwise, and sometimes, but rarely, three times. The horrible habit of digging out all the contents of the grave is usual; the older coffin planks are thrown away, and the human remains

[17] *The Journal of the Limerick Field Club*, Part 4, p. 42.

[18] Cf. the well-known story of the Swaffham tinker and London Bridge.

[19] I heard this tale, perhaps in 1870, from John O'Halloran at Edenvale near Ennis, about the Crowes. Certainly that family (MacEnchroe's) has a hawthorn bush in its armorial bearings, and the motto "Skagh M'Enchroe." Dr. MacNamara conjectures that Flann's surname was really MacEnchroe.

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764 placed on the new coffin. Where burials take place at short intervals the results are best left untold, but such cases are rare. A consequence of this fearful overcrowding is that no old graveyard is free from coffin planks and plates, bones, and fragmentary or whole skulls.[20] Those who saw Quin "Abbey" before 1879 will remember the enormous heap of skulls, (even then, however, much diminished), heaped round a tree near the graveyard gate. At Tomfinlough the bones and skulls were neatly stacked in a recess, at Kilmacreehy they were heaped on a sort of side altar in the chancel, and in other churches (Coad etc.) I have seen single skulls staring out of holes in the wall.

766 Places for the burial of strangers and unbaptized children are common, and are usually *killeens*, old forgotten church sites, sometimes in a fort, sometimes at a well, or unenclosed in a field.[21] Those at Kilquane, near Ennis; Fomeria, near Tulla; Kyleeáne, near Barefield (with Doughnambraher stone); and Kilvoydane, near Spansil Hill, have basin stones. Some *killeens*, such as that between the forts of Mortyclogh, near Corcomroe Abbey, and that at Fortanne, have crept back into favour for adult burial, but several ancient churches at which bones are found have not been so used in traditional memory (*e.g.* Toomullin, Crumlin, Killonaghan, and Kilbract, round Lisdoonvarna; Templeline, in Carran; Temple-an-aird, near Carrigaholt; St. Senan's, on Mutton Island; Temple aed O'Connell, near Ruan; and several churches on Scattery and Iniscaltra). The church of Kilcashen was not remembered to have been a burial place before Eugene O'Curry's grandfather, Melachein O'Curry, in a pestilence about 1760, charitably collected the deserted unburied corpses "on carts and sledges," and buried them at the ruin on his farm.[22] Bodies were similarly buried during the Great Famine at the Lisheen, near Lough Fergus. Oughtdarra, near Lisdoonvarna, has the remains of a church of St. Sinnach MacDara,[23] where children under seven

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[20] See also vol. xxii., p. 56.

[21] For a list, with notes, see *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. vi., ser. iii., p. 139.

[22] Kilcashen, *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Clare), vol. i., p. 369.

[23] A saint famous all round Galway Bay, but not found in the ancient Calendars. Some suppose him to be a Fox Hero, *i.e.* Sinnach mac Dara, Fox

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years of age are buried; after that age bodies are taken to the parish graveyard at Killilagh. In Shanakill, on the Shannon bank opposite Scattery, it was believed that the dead were moved supernaturally under the river into the Sacred Isle.[24]

I know of a case in eastern Clare where parents, having lost several of their children, tried to break the deadly record by changing their burial place, but, alas! without success.

I am not aware of any belief in Clare that the spirit of the last-comer in a graveyard has to watch the place or to bring water to the souls in Purgatory. There was, however, recently a race between two funerals to Rathblamac graveyard, which may imply some such belief. The custom of burying a stone from a church or an ancient tombstone in a new grave, (which has led to the disappearance of several early monuments at Clonmacnoise), prevails at Tomgraney, two ancient tombstones having recently been recovered on digging new graves. As we have already seen,[25] St. Mochulla's well avenged the encroachment of its landlord on the *killeen* beside it, but the graveyards of Kildimo, near Kilkee, and St. Catherine's at Kells, near Corofin, are under cultivation. Dr. MacNamara noted a curious allusion to the last-named in O'Daly's fierce satire on "The Tribes of Ireland" in 1610. The people of Kells are there reproached for "digging the churchyard in the snow." The oldest Irish Law Code, the *Seanchus Mór*, has a clause against digging in a churchyard or breaking bones there. Kildimo was levelled, and its site included in an orchard by 1816.[26] Interference with human remains is deeply and dangerously resented, yet spells are sometimes worked with them.[27] The stealing of a dead man's hand for a butter charm is said to have taken place near Kilkee,[28] and the bones of a Franciscan with the brown cloth of his gown still adhering, found during the repairs at Ennis Abbey, were nearly all taken, but probably from most reverential motives.

son of oak tree. There is a Knockaunatinnagh (little hill of the foxes) beside his church.

[24] *Dublin University Magazine*, vol. xviii. (1841), p. 545.

[25] Vol. xxii., p. 211.

[26] W. G. Mason, *A Statistical Account etc.*, vol. ii., p. 434.

[27] See *Burial and Skull Beliefs*, vol. xxii., pp. 55-6, 456.

[28] Vol. xxii., p. 340.

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turies afterward, and still do in modified form, and became embodied in the medieval culture which was shaped by internal innovation and borrowing from other European traditions. Christianity came to Inis Beag in the early decades of the sixth century. Inis Beag and the other islands in the vicinity became one of the famous monastic centers of Ireland, where over a hundred saints lived or paid extended visits. Among them were St. Enda of the Aran Islands, St. Columbkille who was to Christianize Scotland and much of England, St. Kieran the founder of Clonmacnoise, St. Brendan the Navigator who according to Irish legend reached the coast of Florida in 551, and St. Kevin the founder of Glendalough. Among the principal medieval Christian monuments in Inis Beag are three churches, one and possibly two monasteries, several tombs, and a sacred well.

Only a single female saint is associated with Inis Beag, and a church in her honor stands on the northwest side of the island. Although not the first church on the site, the present building was erected not later than the ninth century, and west of its doorway under a cliff is the foundation of a *clochán* in which the officiating clergyman may have resided. South of the church are a number of ancient tombs, and in a small valley east of it a layer of midden lies beneath manufactured soil. The axe heads were unearthed in the valley only a stone's throw from the church.

Built in the tenth century to honor the patron saint of the island, a second church is located atop a terrace overlooking the beach on the northeast side of Inis Beag. It was used as the regular place of worship until about 1840, when sand began to accumulate about it; at that time, the island cemetery was on a slight hill west of the church, but as the sand grew deeper burials were made next to the church, eventually to form the present cemetery which rings the building almost completely. The tomb of the patron saint stands on the surface of the terrace a short distance from the church, but it and the building nearly to the top of its gables are buried in the sand (see Fig. 3). Each year on June 14th island men dig out the interior of the church and bare the tomb to commemorate the saint. A huge midden, partially covered with sand and solidified to a conglomerate below its surface, is banked against the terrace on the north and measures 20 feet in depth, 150 feet in width, and 450 feet in length. It represents the accumulation of hundreds of years, and possibly thousands if pagan structures antedated Christian ones.

A third church lies buried beneath the sand close to the east end of the beach, and is named after another saint who is believed to be interred near it. Only legend supports its existence, for there is no reference to its unencumbered appearance in the writings of the earliest visitors in the mid-seventeenth century. However, funeral processions bound from the present church to the cemetery leave the main trail to follow what is apparently an archaic predecessor deep in the sand, and at one point the coffin is lowered and the mourners kneel and pray for the soul of the deceased at the place where tradition asserts that the ancient church lies. This custom is disconcerting to the newly appointed or visiting priest, who sometimes when leading a funeral procession will continue on the modern path while the islanders desert him to obey a centuries old prescription.

On the west side of Inis Beag, near the shore, are located a holy well named after a saint and the *clochán* in which he supposedly dwelled during a lengthy stay

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Figure 3. Church of the patron saint and the cemetery

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on the island during the early part of the sixth century. A low wall with two openings has been constructed about the spring, and it is visited frequently by those wishing to obtain water or to pray. I was told by the owners of surrounding fields that when they were children many gallery grave tombs stood in the area, but most of these were removed when the fields first were improved and seeded. Most islanders will not molest prehistoric and medieval monuments, especially those that they believe are burial places, out of reverence for the dead or fear of the ghosts or fairies who reside within them; but down the centuries, such structures gradually have disappeared by being torn down to satisfy building and farming needs. It is the emphatic claim of the folk that the sacred well was created miraculously by the visiting saint and has never dried up, but two unbiased observers reported to me that they had seen it waterless during especially dry summers.

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At least twice during the Middle Ages Inis Beag was laid waste by invading forces: first by Vikings in 1081 (and maybe on other occasions between the ninth and eleventh centuries, when much of Ireland came under the control of Norwegians and Danes), and then in 1334 by Sir John Darcy, the Lord Justice of Ireland, who with a large fleet and army sailed around the Irish coast implementing British rule. The islanders believe that Inis Beag was completely depopulated by the Vikings and possibly by the Darcy expedition, and again by wars once, and maybe twice, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Modern Period (1500 to 1900)

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The castle in Inis Beag built within the Celtic promontory fort, probably erected in the sixteenth century by the mainland family who owned the island,

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at breakfast and lamb, if available, at supper, and the family goes out only to attend mass. Many homes are decorated then for the 12 days, with cards received and sprigs of holly placed on windowsills and fireplace mantels and crepe paper and balloons hung from the ceiling. More visiting among relatives is done between St. Stephen's Day and Epiphany than at any other time of the year, and guests are treated to cakes and drinks, which include liquor.

Whereas the folk during the Christmas season are the most optimistic and expansive, they are the least so for the three or more days following the death of one of their number. Work halts until after the burial of the deceased—"out of respect for the body"—and subdued talk focuses on death and salvation and the tribulations of life on earth. It is at this time that the masochism of the islanders is most in evidence, and they are most prone to discuss the teachings of the church, to reveal doubts concerning the afterworld, and to bemoan their own sinful lives. In evaluating the career of the person who has just died, an attempt is made to explain the cause of his demise, and both natural and supernatural causes are considered. Most deaths are attributed to the natural causes of old age, illness, and accident; but death also can come as the result of God's will and the actions of the Devil and malignant pagan forces, such as witches of the evil eye and ghosts. The immediate mourning for one who dies before the age of 40 years is deep and prolonged, particularly if small children are left with only a single parent, and it is believed that "the good die young." One of the most disliked traditions in Inis Beag is that of formal mourning for a year, during which time social activities for close relatives of the deceased are curtailed severely; they cannot attend parties, sing, dance, or play music in their homes, and men must reduce in number their visits to the pubs. Life is so dull as a matter of course, so the complaint is, that placing restrictions on what few social activities are available makes it almost unbearable.

When a person dies, his body is "waked" in the house until taken in procession to the church during the late afternoon of the day following death. Another procession escorts the coffin to the cemetery early the next morning, after it has stood the night unattended near the altar. How many folk attend the wake and compose the two processions depends on the number of the dead person's kin, his prestige status, and how well he was liked. The "laying out" of the corpse for the wake is done by close female relatives of the deceased; they wash the body and powder its face, put on the clothes or habit, and prepare the bed on which the corpse will rest. A man may be attired in new white bawneens and *crios* and a woman in her wedding dress, but it is becoming more common today for the body to be clothed in a purchased brown habit. On the breast the hands are crossed and rosary beads entwined in the fingers, and the corpse is covered up to the chest with a white sheet which later is used to wrap it up in the coffin. The manufacture of the coffin usually is assigned to one of the canoe and furniture makers, who assembles it crudely with unpainted boards and delivers it the night of the wake or the following morning.

The wake now is a solemn occasion in most of Ireland, and is attended for the purpose of praying for the soul of the dead and sympathizing with the relatives of the deceased. But until recently it was a gay affair, merrier than a wedding,

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characterized by storytelling, games of various sorts, contests of strength, taunting and mocking, mischief-making, and factional fighting (O Suilleabhain 1967: 26–129). It is hard to imagine a wake more somber than that which takes place in Inis Beag. Most of those who attend it do so before midnight and stay two to three hours, coming and going at will, while "only those who own him stay all night." Each visitor on arrival prays briefly at the bedside of the deceased or in the doorway of the room before expressing condolences, and at midnight all who are anywhere in the wake-house kneel and recite the responses of the Rosary intoned by the curate. Immediate kin express their grief in muffled sobs beside the corpse, but the ancient wailing lament for the dead, known as the "keen," no longer is heard in Inis Beag. Tables and benches are set up in the kitchen on which the men sit silently or converse in whispers with their neighbors, as they drink stout or whiskey and pass around clay pipes offered them "to keep the night awake." Most of the women congregate in the room of the dead, where only very old women smoke pipes. I have counted as many as 18 minutes of absolute silence at a wake and have never heard laughter.

Before the procession to the church forms, men tend to gather in small groups outside the house of the deceased and women gather inside the house. After the corpse is placed in the coffin, close relatives and even friends shake the hand and kiss the face of the dead person before the top is nailed down; then the box is carried to the front street and placed across two chairs for prayers to be said and holy water sprinkled over it by the priest. A white sheet is draped on the casket, and six pallbearers shoulder it and carry it through a gap made in the stone fence to the road which leads to the chapel. The pallbearers are both agnatic and uterine kin of the deceased, excluding his sons, and two of them have the further duty of digging the shallow grave that night or in the morning before the body is interred. Moving slowly behind the coffin bearers, the procession is headed by the spouse and sons of the dead person, followed by his daughters, then women, and finally men in a long, slow moving, silent column; children other than the offspring of the deceased seldom join the procession, and the sexes walk separately. The curate may or may not lead this procession and the one the next morning, sometimes preferring to go ahead to church and cemetery by himself. A son of the dead person treats the grave diggers to stout in a pub before they set out with spades for the graveyard, as he does the pallbearers after they return from the church. In the past, the grave was dug as part of the funeral service, but this custom was altered as the cemetery became filled and occasionally diggers by accident broke into previously interred coffins revealing their contents. A number of grisly legends and anecdotes tell of islanders buried alive by mistake, or whose bodies were partially preserved, as revealed by such accidents.

The procession from the chapel to the graveyard leaves the modern road, as we saw in Chapter 1, to follow an ancient, obliterated trail past a church believed to have been buried beneath the sand centuries ago, and then climbs the long hill of kitchen midden and sand to the gate of the cemetery. Here the column breaks up, some people going to the graves of relatives to pray and others to the newly opened grave. Men and women kneel separately at the graveside for the service (see Fig. 11), and many of the women cry as the casket is lowered into the shallow

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Figure 11. Praying at the graveside of an islander

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grave by the two diggers who have leaped into the hole. After the priest has thrown three shovelfuls of dirt on the coffin, the grave is filled in rapidly by the diggers, and the close kin of the deceased and the pallbearers gather around the priest to recite a final Rosary. Those who did not visit the graves of relatives when entering the cemetery do so as they depart. Some graves remain unmarked following the funeral; others are marked with a wooden cross or uninscribed slab of local limestone; while still others have placed over them engraved headstones purchased on the mainland. Several large, flat tombstones dating back over a century cover members of particular families buried atop one another as sand accumulated.

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Twice a year, Inis Beag is visited for a day by the parish priest and a curate, who join the local curate to celebrate special masses, called "the stations" ("the confessions" in Irish), in two homes and in the church. Homes are chosen in such a manner that each of the four villages is represented every year, and each home in the island is so honored every 16 to 22 years. For weeks in advance of the stations, both families are hard at work cleaning, painting, and repairing their houses and surrounding streets, fences, and outbuildings in preparation for the event. Confessions are heard by the three priests the night before, and holy water is sprinkled by them in the streets and on the outbuildings near the two houses as a blessing prior to the masses at nine o'clock in the morning. Stations in the homes are conducted by the visiting clerics and in the chapel by the Inis Beag curate, and the folk are free to attend any one of the three services. Following the masses, the priests and the three local teachers are entertained at breakfast in the chosen homes, after which the sacrament is carried to those who are confined. The families involved look forward eagerly to the event, for the stations are believed to bring them luck and "to drive out the 'big fellow' for a long time." It also forces them

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persons considered overly superstitious. Interesting to note here is the fact that even before the beginning of this century, strength of belief in the pagan supernatural varied among the folk.

Three water dwellers found in the ocean surrounding Inis Beag are the mermaid, sea spirit, and water horse. At least one and maybe three mermaids are associated with particular locations along the coastline of the island. This spirit usually is found sitting on a rock with her fish tail in the water and combing her long hair, although she has been seen hovering over the surface of the sea in a "robe of mist." Discussion of her in the pubs always induces embarrassment among the men, because her perfectly formed female upper body is nude and not always hidden by her tresses; she appears to delight in exposing herself to the puritanical folk. The sea spirit is called the "headless body" for the reason that his seaweed covered hulk lacks any appendages. Like the seal who bears a human soul, he favors following in the wake of *currach*—bobbing up and down in the water and staring balefully at the seamen with huge eyes. Only by dropping an object containing gold into the ocean deeps, which the spirit finds irresistible, can his pursuit be impeded short of rowing back to the island. My wife and I brought to Inis Beag a foot-high statue of a troll, purchased two years before in Norway, made of moss with large glass eyes, which we hung from the wall of our kitchen (as we had from the dashboard of our car) as a good luck charm. It aroused excitement among fishermen who visited us because of its resemblance to the headless body; one man reasoned that this being must inhabit all of the northern seas, and probably arouses equal consternation among Scottish and Scandinavian seafarers. The water horse is a demon counterpart of the mermaid, with black body of a steed and tail of a giant fish. Until 40 years ago, it lived in the fresh water lake of Inis Beag, where it was seen on certain nights traveling abreast the surface with its head held high and mane waving in the wind. Now it is seen only at sea and infrequently at great distance.

The single pookah of Inis Beag resides in a Copper-Bronze Age tumulus (see Fig. 12), which became a medieval cemetery with rough headstones still in place; located on the western margin of the common land, it is known as the Hill of Ferns. In the Middle Ages, the church urged systematic reinterpretation of Christian and pagan elements (It was advocated as early as 601 by Pope Gregory VII in a letter to priests who were proselytizing the primitive Britons.). This policy is attested in Inis Beag and neighboring islands not only by Christian graveyards being located contiguous to pagan ones, but by Christian church buildings incorporating Druidic temples and Celtic holy wells being appropriated by Christian worshippers. During the day, the "dog of the tumulus," as this demon is called, will twist the limbs of unwary individuals who chance to fall asleep on the mound, and at night it is known to race across the sands of strand and common land, altering its size at will from that of a small dog to that of a bull, to frighten those who might be passing. It appears that Irish emigrants carried both the mermaid and pookah abroad with them as early as the seventeenth century, at least to the West Indies. In doing research among the "Black Irish" of Montserrat during 1965, 1966, and last year, I discovered a mermaid with white skin who guards a pot of gold buried on top of Chance's Mountain, and a pookah in the form of a